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CBC Newsletter

for members of the Carolina Bird Club, Inc., ornithological society of the Carolinas

Volume 50 January/February 2004 Number 1

Fabulous Spring Mountain Birding

By Charlotte Goedsche

Fontana Village? In far western North Carolina? I was skeptical at first, but after checking with people who had attended CBC meetings there in 1978 and 1996, the "WOW!" factor kicked in. For example, Clyde Smith, the editor of the *CBC Newsletter* for many years, wrote: "The most vivid memory (of the 1978 meeting) was a bush full of warblers, including my first Golden-winged Warbler, on a glorious day in April."

Golden-winged and Cerulean Warblers, among others, are virtually guaranteed at the meeting **April 30 – May 2.** The weekend was also picked to coincide with the mountains' incomparable wildflower display. Butterflies will be showing off, too. Some field trips will be aimed at wildflowers and butterflies, in addition to birds.

Scheduled field trips will be held Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. The walking required for many of the trips can be classified as easy; you needn't be a mountain goat to enjoy birding in the mountains! Field trips will target birds in the immediate vicinity as well as in the Smokies. Other destinations include the legendary Stecoah Gap, the new Cherohala Skyway, and the mountain fen known as Tulula bog. (Detailed descriptions of the field trips will be published in the March newsletter along with registration forms for the meeting and field trips.)

Taking advantage of Fontana's proximity to Tennessee, we have invited two of that state's finest birders to present the evening programs. On Friday, Dr. Fred J. Alsop, III, Professor of Biological Sciences at East Tennessee State University and widely published author and wildlife photographer, will present a program on "Birds of the Smokies." His illustrated talk will touch on their ecology and behavior, the habitats they frequent in the National Park, identification tips, and photography. Fred has over 35 years experience in the Smokies, and is an excellent presenter.

The Saturday program will be presented by the Blue Ridge Coordinator for Tennessee Partners in Flight, J. Wallace Coffey. Like Fred, Wallace is an avid and dedicated educator, researcher, and birder; however, Wallace is not a professional ornithologist but a "citizen scientist." Wallace will present an illustrated talk tracing his development as an amateur ornithologist, from his first bird banding as a teenager to his fascinating research into owls and other raptors.

Accommodations for the meeting will be held at the Historic Fontana Village Resort (www.fontanavillage.com). The resort has an indoor pool, tennis courts, mini-golf, and trails, in addition to a general store and other amenities. (Note, however, that Graham County is dry.) Since there are no restaurants nearby, all meals will be served buffet style (not included with cost of lodging), with box lunches available for those going on all-day field trips. **The cut-off date for reservations is March 15—any rooms remaining after that date will be open to the public—so make your reservations early!** Call 1-800-849-2258 to make reservations and be sure to mention you are attending the CBC meeting.

In addition to double rooms in the Inn ($64), a few Fireplace Rooms ($80) in the Inn are available, as well as the following: Willow Cottages (1 bath, 1 bedroom with double bed - $89); Laurel Cottages (1 bath, 2 bedrooms: 1 double, 2 twin beds - $67); Azalea Cottages (2 baths, 3 bedrooms: 1 double, 2x2 twins - $119); and Log Cabins (2 baths, 2 bedrooms: 1 double, 2 twins - $172). The Azalea Cottages and the Log Cabins have fireplaces. Campsites with hookups are $20 and tent sites are $10. (Quoted rates do not include the 10% sales tax.) Single people may want to find roommates to take advantage of the cottages and cabins. Those who wish to extend their stay should note that all Inn rooms are only $49 Sunday through Thursday, so come early and stay longer in beautiful western NC!

Upcoming CBC Meetings

Augusta, GA - Sept. 24-26, 2004
Atlantic Beach, NC - Jan. 28-30, 2005
Blowing Rock, NC - Spring 2005

CBC Memory

By John Ennis

Confused Fall Birder Last September I attended the Carolina Bird Club meeting in Hickory, NC. Unfortunately I could only stay one day due to a football game in Raleigh on Saturday. The CBC meeting was hosted by Dwayne Martin, who also served as guide for my morning trip. Simon Thompson presented a program Friday night on confusing fall warblers that I wish I had seen before the field trips, because I proved to be a confused fall birder.

My morning trip covered Hickory City Park, Geitner Park, and Glenn Hilton Park. Our birds included: Green Heron; Blue-winged Teal; Yellow-billed Cuckoo; Eastern Wood-Pewee; White-breasted and Brown-headed Nuthatches; White-eyed, Yellow-throated, Philadelphia, and Red-eyed Vireos; Tennessee, Nashville, Magnolia, and Black-throated Green Warblers; and Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

We saw several Cape May's in a variety of plumages. Everyone kept calling out Chestnut-sided Warblers, but I couldn't find one. I probably saw at least one of these birds, but didn't recognize it's fall plumage.

In the afternoon, we visited the Wagner Property on the Yadkin River, off NC 268, north of Lenoir. This is private property that we birded with permission. It is a wonderful fall birding site! I added Red-headed Woodpecker, Eastern Phoebe, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Common Yellowthroat, and Scarlet Tanager. After I left, the group found a feeding wave that included Black-and-White, Bay-breasted, Blackburnian, Chestnut-sided, and Yellow-throated Warblers. Our guide said they had had fifteen warbler species, plus, a Western Kingbird on the morning trip to the Wagner property.

I learn something on every trip. In August I learned from a Maine birder how to pish from a car. Funny, I had just never thought about doing that. I have played bird songs from my SUV's CD player, but never thought of pishing. Duh!

For its educational value, this trip was no exception. Another lesson was learned from a newspaper article on the CBC meeting in the *Hickory Record.* It quoted Lori Martin on the difference between birdwatching and birding: "Birdwatchers let the birds come to them; birders go out to look for the birds." I knew this, but I liked the way she said it. She should have, however, worked the word "obsession" into her definition of birding!

I also learned that you can pish a bird out of the sky, though this has yet to be proven in my experience. We were trying to locate a Rose-breasted Grosbeak by its squeak, which sounds like a sneaker on a gym floor. We flushed the bird, a juvenile grosbeak, and as it flew overhead, Dwayne tried to pish it out of the air. No joke; he says it sometimes brings them down.

My education continues!

Editor's note: CBC Memory is a regular feature in the Newsletter. Please send me one of your favorite CBC memories (between 300-600 words) to share with others.

Just Outside the Window

By Donna Slyce

Foul Weather Visitor He visits only occasionally, always in the dead of winter in the worst of weather, during the rare Carolina snows or those dark, wet dreary days when the near-freezing rain spatters down all day long. When the weather turns nasty, I make sure that I have made him a proper welcome. Before he appears, if he appears this time, I find myself spending time looking for him among the crowd. There he is! There are the rusty wings and tail, rufous-streaked back and distinct breast spots, and almost always scratching like a miniature chicken on the ground, with both feet working in unison amidst the throngs at the feeders.

Fox Sparrows at the feeder are one of the not-so-quiet pleasures of winter birdwatching, an occasion for a quickly indrawn breath and a quietly gasped "Wow!" Here in the Carolinas, they are winter residents, though not often seen. Even in winter, fragments of their breeding song can be heard. The usually clear musical whistle wavers and quavers a bit, hesitates in spots, and is incomplete, like most winter birdsong.

Of the four "groups" easily separable from among the 16 named subspecies of Fox Sparrow, most of our winter visitors are the rufous eastern form with the rusty wings and tail, rufous-streaked back, and rufous breast spots. There is little documentation on other subspecies of Fox Sparrow in the Carolinas, though rumors circulate occasionally. Personally I've heard of both the Sooty Fox Sparrow and the Slate-colored Fox Sparrow.

The Sooty Fox Sparrow breeds in Alaska and the Pacific Northwest. Like many of the subspecies originating in the Pacific Northwest, the Sooty Fox Sparrow is a chocolate-brown bird. The little red in his plumage is limited to a tinge on the rump and the edges of flight feathers. The Slate-colored Fox Sparrow breeds in the Rockies from Colorado north to British Columbia and Alberta and west to eastern California. The Slate-colored Fox Sparrow is a gray bird on the upperparts with dark brown breast streaking and rufous wings and tail.

The other easily recognizable form is the Thick-billed Fox Sparrow, breeding from Southern California to Mt. Hood in the Cascades of Oregon. The Thick-billed Fox Sparrow is grayish-brown above with sparse breast spotting of small inverted black "V's" and a grosbeak-like bill. The breeding song and communication note of each group differs. Based on the geographically separable plumage differences and song differences, as well as mitochondrial DNA differences, it is apparent that Fox Sparrows are well along in the long process of divergent speciation.

Regardless of the subspecies that shows up at your feeders, scratching among the leaves under the seed feeder with the Chipping Sparrows and the Dark-eyed Juncos, a sighting of a Fox Sparrow is a moment to be savored, to be still, and to enjoy the clarity of pleasure in viewing one of winter's most distinguished sparrows.

crescent moon
just visible between reeds
blue-winged teal

Haiku poem by Linda Jennette Ward

Feathered Features

Lynne Mattocks Lucas

Help track birds in your community by participating in the **Great Backyard Bird Count February 13-16, 2004.** Hosted by National Audubon Society and Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, you can join the fun by reporting birds sighted in your backyard or on a birding trip to a park or refuge. Report your sightings at www.birdsource.org. You'll also be able to see what birds are being seen in other areas across the U.S. Last year the Northern Cardinal was the most commonly reported species on the count. What will it be this year?

Cranes at Hiwassee Wildlife Refuge The Hiwassee Wildlife Refuge in southeastern Tennessee hosts up to 10,000 wintering Sandhill Cranes. Most of these cranes nest in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, and Ontario, Canada. Traditionally their fall migration route to their wintering grounds in Georgia and Florida takes them through Tennessee, but the past few years thousands of cranes have been seen wintering on the refuge grounds in Tennessee. The first cranes arrive in October, with their numbers increasing in November and December and peaking in January and February. There is also an opportunity to see the rare Whooping Crane as they're migrating from Florida to Wisconsin. To help celebrate the cranes, the Cherokee Indian Heritage and Sandhill Crane Viewing Days takes place on Saturday, February 7, 2004 in Birchwood, Tennessee. Naturalists and Native American groups present programs on cranes and local history. For more information visit www.southeasttennesse.com or call 423-334-5850.

CBC Merchandise Available New CBC sweatshirts will be available for purchase at the winter CBC meeting in Beaufort, SC. There will also be a new order of CBC caps—same two styles and three colors as last time. Look for short sleeve knit polo-style shirts by the spring meeting in Fontana. Dana Harris will be selling the items at the registration table. Have fun supporting CBC and birding by wearing your new CBC wear!

Welcome New CBC Members!

John & Joanne Bnestall-Cornelius, NC
Joan Carr & Phillip Estet-South Williamson, KY
Dan Chambers-Greensboro, NC
Ann Cook-Lenoir, NC
Roberta F. Cox-Matthews, NC
Rack Cross-Blountville, TN
Jim & Pat Fahl-Hickory, NC
Joseph T. Hartman-Connelly Springs, NC
Lee Hollifield-Statesville, NC
Robert R. Jones-Charlotte, NC
Rene Kimray-Concord, NC
Jane & Mark Lewis-Asheboro, NC
Jean McAnulty-Hickory, NC
Jill Midgett & Gary McAlister-Charleston, SC
Kathryn B. Nyman-Asheville, NC
Bill Peay-Westminster, SC
H.F. & Joan Redmile-Seneca, SC
Kara Reichhart-Durham, NC
Susan Rice-Morganton, NC
Lisa Richman-Pinehurst, NC
Harry D. Sell-Boiling Springs Lakes, NC
Fran Shelton-Advance, NC
Edward & Agnes Smith-Cary, NC
Roberta O. Smith-Raleigh, NC
Andy Webb-Jacksonville, NC
Tim White-Bluffton, SC
Dr. Bruce Young-Durham, NC

New Life Members

Dennis E. Osc-Cary, NC
Steven Tracy-Gastonia, NC

Keep an Eye on Those Hummingbird Feeders! *By Susan Campbell*

It is not too late to spot a winter hummingbird at your feeder. Although the northbound Ruby-throats are a few months away, winter hummers are still roaming the Carolinas. Sightings since fall have been as numerous as ever and the season is not over yet. So far Rufous, Calliope, Ruby-throated, and Black-chinned Hummingbirds have been banded in North and/or South Carolina. The number of people with multiple hummingbirds this winter, especially inland, is impressive. The two most amazing discoveries of the season so far have been finding four Rufous in one yard in the northern mountains (Jefferson, Ashe County) of North Carolina and two Calliopes and a Rufous in one yard in western (Greer, Greenville County) South Carolina.

A good number of the hummingbirds found feeders later this winter, most likely as a result of the warmer temperatures. So be sure your feeder is someplace that you can easily monitor and let me know if you or someone you know sees a hummingbird between now and March 15th. Feel free to call (910-949-3207) or email (ncaves@utinet.net) any time.

If you have not already done so, check out the North Carolina State Museum of Natural Sciences hummingbird web site at www.naturalsciences.org/nchummers.

Editor's note: This Rufous Hummingbird was banded by Susan Campbell on December 7, 2003 at our home in Raleigh, NC. After keeping a feeder filled for two winters, I was about to take the feeder down in early December. Later that week our unexpected guest arrived. I took this picture just before Susan released him. He's been a joy to watch as he hovers around the feeder and nearby bushes. So, as Susan says, "Keep an eye on those hummingbird feeders!" I'm glad I did!

Gray Flycatcher in NC

On December 28, 2003 a Gray Flycatcher was spotted on the Jordan Lake Christmas Bird Count in Chatham County. This is a first record for NC, one of a handful in the eastern US, and the first for the Southeast. Many birders have added this flycatcher to their life list and NC list as they line up along a fence to scope the cow pasture where the flycatcher is feeding. Derb Carter writes, "When perched, it continuously lowered its tail from a stationary position and raised it's back in a deliberate, not jerky or twitching, manner. Gray Flycatcher is described as one of the "longest" *Empidonax* with a longer bill and tail than other species and, as the name implies, an overall grayish appearance, all consistent with the bird observed." This photo was taken by Will Cook on December 31, 2003.

Traveling Outside the Carolinas with CBC

Special CBC Venture to Trinidad and Tobago *By Simon Thompson*

Space is still available on the special CBC Venture to Trinidad and Tobago **November 8-18, 2004**. If you have always wanted to start birding in the tropics, this is the trip for you. Led by CBC member and Ventures owner, Simon Thompson, this 10 day trip is the perfect introduction to tropical birding. A week on Trinidad should bring us such gems as Scarlet Ibis, Blue-crowned Motmot, and Ruby-Topaz Hummingbird, while our Tobago extension offers Red-billed Tropicbird, White-tailed Sabrewing, and Rufous-vented Chachalaca—not to mention Caribbean sunsets and rum punches....perfect! The cost is $2,650 per person from Miami.

If you would like information on the CBC Trinidad and Tobago trip or any other Venture trip (the 2004 Ventures calendar is available), please contact Simon at PO Box 1095, Skyland, NC 28776 or call 828-253-4247. You can also check out new trips and photos at www.birdventures.com.

Dates Set for CBC Oklahoma and New Mexico Trip *By John Dole*

Burrowing Owl photo by Steve Metz

While the signature species of the Southern Great Plains is the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, the region boasts hundreds of other bird species. Travel with fellow birders to sample the birds of western Oklahoma and northern New Mexico. Highlights will include the endangered Black-capped Vireo, nine species of hawks, eagles, kites and falcons, five wrens, the newly split Black-crested Titmouse, and thousands of shorebirds. Great Plains playas should be teaming with ibis, ducks, and shorebirds. A variety of other Great Plains and western bird species, including Burrowing Owl pictured to the left, will round out the trip. If there is enough interest, a side trip will be included to see nesting Snowy Plovers at the Great Salts Plains.

The trip will begin in Oklahoma City on **May 8 and conclude on May 14.** Cost will be $575 and will cover all ground transportation, lodging, tolls, and fees. Register by sending your name, address, phone number, and email address, plus $100 deposit to CBC headquarters: CBC Headquarters Secretary, 11 West Jones Street, Raleigh, NC 27601-1029. Limit is 16 participants with priority to the first registrations received.

For more information contact John Dole at 919-662-0785 or john_dole@ncsu.edu.

CBC Bonus Field Trips

Charleston, SC - February 20-22. Can't get enough South Carolina Lowcountry ducks, or can't make the Beaufort meeting? Then join us in Charleston the weekend of February 20 - 22 for serious birding, serious seafood, and serious fun. Over Saturday and Sunday we'll hit the old Coast Guard Station at Folly Beach, the Pitt Street causeway on Mount Pleasant, Sullivan's Island, Breach Inlet, Moores Landing (near Bulls Island), Francis Marion National Forest, Magnolia Gardens, and who knows where else. We'll look for everything from accipiters to yellowlegs and Orange-crowned Warblers to Bald Eagles. We'll drive into Charleston for dinner Friday and Saturday nights, so bring your appetite. Headquarters will be the Holiday Inn Folly Beach, 800-465-4329 (refer to Group Code "CBC" to get the $80/night rate). Meet at the Holiday Inn at 7 pm Friday to carpool to dinner and/or meet at the hotel 7 am Saturday morning to begin birding. Limited to 20 participants, $10/pp. Leader is Bob Wood. Non-birding spouses are welcome to come and shop with Bob's wife, Pamela ("If there ain't gonna be no Painted Buntings, I'm goin' shoppin.")

Green Swamp and Ft. Fisher, NC - Mar. 27 In the morning, we will be in Brunswick County, NC, which can be a great area for birding in early spring. Join us as we search the Green Swamp for early spring birds such as White-eyed Vireo, gnatcatchers, and warblers (Northern Parula, Black-throated Green, Yellow-throated, Prairie, Black-and-White, Prothonotary, Ovenbird, Louisiana Waterthrush, and Hooded). We'll also look for Red-cockaded Woodpecker and Bachman's Sparrow. Who knows, a Swallow-tailed Kite might even show up in the skies overhead! We will then bird our way to the Southport ferry and over to Ft. Fisher, New Hanover County, NC. We'll spend the afternoon looking for waterbirds such as long-legged waders, shorebirds, and terns. Some of the herons and egrets and gulls and terns will be getting their fine spring plumages by this time. We should be able to finish the day in the Ft. Fisher-Carolina Beach area.

Meeting place for the trip will be at Supply, NC at the intersection of NC 211 and US 17 in Brunswick County. Plan to gather in the parking lot of Hardees on US 17 at 7 am. Cost is $10/ pp. We'll caravan for the day. The trip will end late afternoon or early evening, giving time for those to make arrangements to get a room for the night or to return home. Wilmington, NC has multiple lodging opportunities for those so inclined. The trip will be limited to 10 participants, to keep the caravan to a manageable size. If any questions, please contact Ricky Davis at RJDNC@aol.com or 252-443-0276.

Register for both trips below!

Carolina Bird Club Bonus Field Trip Form

Charleston, SC - February 20-22, 2004
Green Swamp and Ft. Fisher, NC - March 27, 2004

Name(s) _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Day Phone _____ Evening phone _____ Email _____

Enclosed is my check for $_____ for _____ member(s) to participate in the Charleston trip.
Enclosed is my check for $_____ for _____ member(s) to participate in the Green Swamp/Ft. Fisher trip.

Make check payable to Carolina Bird Club and send to: CBC, 11 West Jones Street, Raleigh, NC 27601-1029.

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